

## Does the household environment need to be treated?

- Routine cleaning of the child's environment, including washing recently used clothing, bedding and linens in hot water is recommended.
- Items that can not be washed should be sealed in plastic bags for **2 weeks**.
- Vacuum carpeting, upholstery and car seats.

**Remember:** Head lice can survive off a human host for up to 48 hours and nits will hatch within 7-10 days.

## What if I don't get rid of head lice after treatment?

Consult your pediatrician or inform the school clinic.

## How can the spread of head lice be stopped?

The key to successful eradication of a head lice infestation is to break their life cycle through proper treatment.

## Will I ever get rid of head lice?

Don't get discouraged! It takes time and **YES**, it will end. The main reasons for continued infestations are:

- Did not follow directions on the product.
- Did not remove all lice or nits.
- Did not treat the environment thoroughly.

**Remember:** Each person with head lice needs a complete treatment. Do not split a single box of shampoo or container of rinse treatment between those that are infested.

### Health Department District Offices

Herndon-Reston  
1850 Cameron Glen Dr., Suite 100  
Reston, VA 20190  
703-481-4242

Mount Vernon  
8350 Richmond Hwy., Suite 233  
Alexandria, VA 22309  
703-704-5203

Springfield  
8136 Old Keene Mill Rd.  
Springfield, VA 22152  
703-569-1031

Falls Church  
6245 Leesburg Pike, Suite 500  
Falls Church, VA 22044  
703-534-8343

Joseph Willard Health Center  
3750 Old Lee Highway  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
703-246-7100



*A Fairfax County, Va., publication (July 2008)*



Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all County programs, services, and activities. Special accommodations will be provided upon request.

For further information call:  
703-246-2411  
TTY 703-591-6435

Visit our Web site: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd)

# Head Lice Treatment

*What Parents  
Need To Know!*



## Pediculus humanus capitis



Photo courtesy of the CDC

## What are head lice?

Head lice (*or Pediculosis*) are small, wingless parasitic insects approximately 1/8 of an inch long (about the size of a sesame seed) that live on the scalp. Head lice are very quick and use a hook-like claw to stay attached to the hair.

## What are nits?

Female lice lay eggs called nits that are whitish, oval sacs approximately 1/16 of an inch long (about the size of a pin head). The nits are attached to the hair shaft by a cement-like substance that makes them difficult to remove. The life cycle of head lice is approximately 30 days during which time each female louse can lay up to 7-10 nits a day.



## Who gets head lice?

**ANYONE** can get head lice! It is most common in pre-school and elementary school-aged children (ages 3-12) and females. Kids are much more likely to get lice from family members and playmates than from classmates at school.

## How are head lice spread?

- **DIRECT** contact with an infested person.
- **INDIRECT** contact with personal belongings of an infested person such as brushes, combs, clothing, bedding, upholstered furniture and car interiors, all of which temporarily harbor lice.

## What are symptoms of head lice?

- **ITCHING AND SCRATCHING** usually on the back of the scalp and neck and behind the ears.
- **SORES ON THE HEAD** caused by scratching.
- **VISIBLE** lice or nits.

### Remember: NITS STICK ON THE HAIR.

Some children may have no symptoms.

Don't confuse dirt or dandruff with nits.

## Who should I notify if my child has head lice?

- **Pediatrician**
- **School Clinic**
- **Playmates and close friends outside of school**

## Should all family members be treated?

- **ALL** family members residing with an infested person should be examined for the presence of head lice.
- Treat **ANY** family member with a head lice infestation.

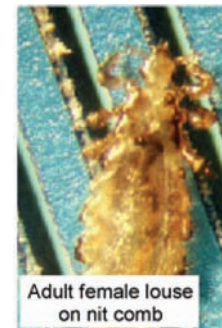
### Exceptions:

Children under two years of age or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding **should not** use an anti-pediculosis product.

Persons with chronic illness or the elderly should consult their physician.

## What is the treatment for head lice?

- **USE AN FDA APPROVED**, over-the-counter anti-pediculosis product. Prescription products are also available.
- **READ THE INSTRUCTIONS** before using any product and follow **ALL** instructions.
- **COMB HAIR** with a fine-tooth nit comb to remove lice and nits.
- **DISINFECT** all combs and brushes before using again by immersing them in hot water greater than 130 degrees or soaking in anti-pediculosis shampoo for 1 hour.
- **CHECK YOUR CHILD'S HAIR DAILY**. Manually remove nits for 2 weeks following the initial treatment.
- **RETREAT** your child 8-10 days after initial treatment.
- **CONTINUE** to check your child's head weekly for at least 4 weeks.



## There is NO proof that the following treatments work:

Vinegar  
Compounds that claim to dissolve the glue on the nits "to ease their removal"  
Mayonnaise  
Olive Oil  
Tea Tree Oil  
Lotions that claim to "suffocate" lice  
Petroleum jelly  
Other household chemicals, including: kerosene, gasoline, paint thinners and turpentine

If you have questions regarding treatment for head lice, please contact your pediatrician or your local health department.